



STATE OF WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Women's Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2006

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WISCONSIN WOMEN'S COUNCIL RELEASES FIRST EVER BENCHMARK STUDY OF WOMEN IN ELECTED OFFICE

The Wisconsin Women's Council has assembled the first ever benchmark of women serving in elected local government offices in Wisconsin. The report covers more than 16,600 elected and appointed offices in Wisconsin, finding that, in 2005, women held an estimated 20 percent of elected seats statewide. The report: "Women in Elected Office in Wisconsin: 2005 Benchmark Study" is available on the Council's web site at <http://womenscouncil.wi.gov>.

Whether in the corporate board room or the town hall, advancing women's leadership and creating a community where women and men can lead together, is critical to Wisconsin's social and economic future.

"As Wisconsin's entrepreneurs, teachers, artists, scientists, mothers, daughters, and wives - women have played a vital role in Wisconsin's heritage and economic well-being," Governor Doyle said. "Their full participation is vital as we continue to build a vibrant future for the next generation of Wisconsin citizens."

Women currently hold some of Wisconsin's most visible public offices, including Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Superintendent of Public Instruction and Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, as well as two seats in the US Congressional delegation. Women hold 26 percent of State Assembly seats and 24 percent of State Senate seats and three of seven seats (43 percent) on the State Supreme Court. These relatively high figures do not predict, however, women's participation rates in local government offices.

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THE WISCONSIN WOMEN'S COUNCIL IDENTIFIES BARRIERS THAT PREVENT WOMEN
IN WISCONSIN FROM PARTICIPATING FULLY AND EQUALLY IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE
AND WORKS CLOSELY WITH PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND NOT-FOR-PROFIT GROUPS
TO DEVELOP LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS TO THOSE INEQUITIES.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: WWW.WOMENSCOUNCIL.WI.GOV

In 2005, women made up an estimated 37 percent of school boards but only 7 percent of town boards. On average, women held only about 20 percent of seats – about 2 of every 10 -- on village boards, city councils, and county boards. The rate declines markedly for leadership positions, with women accounting for only an estimated 10 percent of all local government leaders, including city mayors, county executives, and school board, town, village and county board presidents and chairs. By comparison, women accounted for more than 80 percent of the more administrative elected and appointed offices such as clerks and treasurers in town, village, and county governments.

These averages also underestimate the number of women holding elected office in many communities. For example, an estimated 75 percent of town boards have no female board members, compared to 28 percent of village boards, 16 percent of city councils and 6 percent of school boards. Future work by the Women's Council will attempt to map the distribution of female office holders to see where in Wisconsin women are holding elected office.

As we approach the 2006 election season, starting with the April 4, 2006, local elections, this benchmark will provide the means to track women's progress in holding elected office across Wisconsin.

"By bringing more qualified women to the political table, we don't just make our government more representative of our population, we add diverse perspectives and insights to the decision making process," said Kris Martinsek, Women's Council Chair. "Recent research within the corporate sector shows that diversity in leadership contributes to bottom line business success. Growing the number of women in all levels of government throughout the state is a must as we seek innovation and fresh ideas to make government more efficient and accountable and work to ensure our public policies are robust and reflective of the goals and values of all of our citizens."

For more information about the Wisconsin Women's Council or to download a copy of the 2005 Benchmark study, visit our web site at <http://womenscouncil.wi.gov>.

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